February, 1796.

REMARKS

ON A

LETTER

RELATIVE TO

The late Petitions, &c.

Benjamin Dickinson

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

REMARKS

ON A

LETTER

RELATIVE TO THE

LATE PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT,

FOR THE

Safety and Preservation

OF

His Majesty's Person,

AND

FOR THE MORE EFFECTUALLY

Preventing Seditious Meetings and Assemblies;

Benjamin WITH *Dickinson*

COMPLEAT ABSTRACTS

OF THE

SEVERAL CLAUSES CONTAINED IN EACH BILL.

FOR THE USE OF THE PUBLIC.

By Sir EDWARD HARINGTON, KNT.

Author of an Excursion from Paris to Fontainbleau; a Schizzo on Genius; and Desultory Thoughts on the French Nation, &c.

" ——— Such is the infection of the time,
" That for the health and physic of our right,
" We give *new law* its *virtue.*

" ——— Should we abide in dread, we debase
" The nature of our seats, and make the rabble
" Call our cares, *fears*; which will in time break ope
" The locks o'the senate, and bring in the crows
" To peck the eagles."

BATH: PRINTED AND SOLD FOR THE AUTHOR,

BY G. STEART, STATIONER,

Barton-Street, Queen-Square;

AND BY T. N. LONGMAN, PATER-NOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

To the Reader.

THE following letter was intended for a country newspaper, but the writer having extended its contents farther than originally intended, it was on that account withheld. The subject, indeed, is so interesting, that, as Mr. Dogberry says, "Truly, if I were as "tedious as a King, I could find in my heart "to bestow it all on this subject."

"Controversy can hardly ever be dispas-"sionate.—The *warmth* of the advocate will "be corrected by the calm neutrality of the "judge."—That judge is the public. Therefore, to the sense, passions, and feelings, of this impartial judge, a *warm* friend to his country and to mankind, now confidently appeals. The writer has, however, been as *moderate* in his zeal for the public welfare, as the great stake would admit of; but he

Benjamin Dickinson

he confesses to have sometimes found it difficult to repress the ardour of conviction! He has said nothing personal of any man; and thus publicly declares, that he does not know who is the *author* of the *letter* to which he has alluded; he only thinks he has a right to offer his sentiments in common with his fellow-subjects, on so interesting a concern.

If we shall be accused, by *certain* people, of speaking our mind too *freely*, let it be considered, that we speak in plain terms of those who have not only *spoken their minds* in plain terms, but have recently attempted to *shew their minds* IN ACTION; men who brutally

> " Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
> " That no compunctious visitings of nature
> " Shake their fell purpose."

It grieves us to say this of our countrymen; but when they are *ungrateful* and *unnatural*, the mere condemnation *by words*, is a very slight punishment for their offences. We have therefore spoken of them *nec temerè nec timide*. The fact is, that detesting such principles, we are not afraid publicly to avow, that they are considered

considered as hostile to the general interests and happiness of mankind!*

" When I have most need to employ a friend,
" And most assured that he is a friend,
" Deep, hollow, treacherous, and full of guile,
" Be one of them to me."

When we gave our opinion so *freely*, in a pamphlet, of the French Jacobins, at the time they were in full power, it was given to understand, by anonymous letters, and by the open warning of others, that we should incur

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* It is astonishing to what a degree these new Philosophers carry their zeal; their minds seem so depraved, that they would not only overturn all regular governments, but extirpate the governors! One of these people lately declared, that had he his will, he would have the King and both houses of parliament put to death! An unexceptionable person heard him say it in his own house, accompanied with all the horrible execrations of fanatic fury.

This man is an *illuminee*, and strongly attached to the metaphysical politics of France!

Of such degenerated Englishmen, we may say, with the good Lord Chamberlain, in Henry VIIIth.

" Is it possible, that the spells of France
" Should juggle men into such strange mysteries?"

great

great danger from publishing such opinion; as it was then expected and hoped, by the enemies of the constitution, that Jacobins would also triumph and rule in this country.

" ——— Knaves and fools would then have
" Pluck'd the grave-wrinkled senate from the bench,
" And minister'd in their steads."

But mark the contrast;—in a very short time after, this much-dreaded and bloody race, which had *organized* terror throughout France, was in one day subdued; and the name of a Jacobin is now as much detested, even in that country, as it is by every honest man in this. We also trust the time is not far off, when the principles and conduct of a certain dangerous society in this country, will be equally execrated.

" 'Twas they incens'd the rabble 'gainst the King:
" Cats that can judge as fitly of his worth,
" As I can of those mysteries which Heaven
" Will not have Earth to know."

The late horrid attempt on his Majesty's life, has justly excited the indignation of every

every *good* subject in the kingdom!* To prevent, therefore, as far as it is within the means of human power, such an atrocious attempt in future, as well for the better securing our constitution, it was thought expedient to make some laws for those purposes. Loyal subjects petitioned parliament for such laws! others opposed such petitions, under pretended apprehensions for their liberties; because forsooth, they could not have the *pleasure* of attending and assisting at seditious meetings, whose avowed purpose it was to overturn the government of their country!

It being the sense of every honest man, and every man of property in the king-

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* There was a time when the world was not so full of traitors and treason, that Kings might exclaim,

" ———Do not fear our person;
" There's such *divinity* doth hedge a King,
" That treason can but peep to what it would,
" Acts little of his will"

But when the *divinity* no longer *stirs* in the minds of certain men, Kings, Princes, nor Nobles, have no better chance of escaping tne hands of assassins, than the real friends of their country would have (if a change was to happen) from the cruel hands of usurpers, jacobins, and sans culottes!!!

dom, (who is not a fool) that the constitution is really worth preserving from the rapacious hands of plunderers, assassins, and tyrannical usurpers; and also the opinion of every understanding and honest lawyer in the kingdom, that there existed no sufficient restrictive law for such salutary purpose, it was absolutely necessary such laws should be enacted as might protect the King and constitution from imminent danger.

It is an *artful pretence* in opposition, to say, that we shall lose any part of our liberties by these bills; the contrary is the truth! they secure our liberties from usurpers who would wrest them from us. The idea of their tending to cause despotism, is equally remote from truth, although the unhappy dupes of a desperate and disappointed faction, have asserted it, at a *late* violent meeting held in the metropolis.

Let men who have not thought much of the subject, or such who will not easily give way to any opinion but their own, (and of the party they have pledged to support,) ask themselves, whether it can be reasonably supposed,

posed, that any of their countrymen, in their senses, would petition their representatives to enslave them, or to abridge them of any of their liberties? Can it be justly imagined, that they who are the most interested in preserving the constitution, would petition for tyranny? and that the watchful state of parliament would consent to make the King a despot?—ridiculous! Surely we ought to infer, that when only forty-four members, out of five hundred and fifty-eight, voted against the bills, that the great majority judged right in supporting their opinion, and that of their petitioning constituents, consisting of the ablest men in the kingdom, true patriots, sound politicians, and of men possessed of the greatest portion of the landed property in the kingdom, united with the army, navy, and church!

After what has passed, it is more than insolence and folly for a small minority to make any farther resistance to these necessary bills.

If opposition had been in the ministry, there is no doubt (under such necessity) but

but they would have supported these bills, and probably have made them much stronger; as was the case of a celebrated East-India Bill, which would have given the minister, and his friends, patronage and power far beyond what the present government possesses.

In a word, the day on which those bills passed, our ministers gained a more splendid and important victory over our enemies, than has been gained by all the GENERALS and ADMIRALS during the war!!!

" Let fame, that all hunt after in their lives,
" Live registered upon their brazen tombs,
" And then grace them in the disgrace of death."

REMARKS

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RELATIVE TO

The late Petitions, &c.

"——— What Statesmen oft do *best*,
" By *sick* interpreters or *weak* ones, is
" Basely deemed, or not allowed.

" ——— If we stand still in fear,
" Our motion will be mocked or carped at,
" We should take root here, where we sit, or sit
" State statues only."

QUOD VERUM ATQUE DECENS.

A WRITER in one of the newspapers, who signs himself 'A REAL FRIEND TO THE 'KING AND CONSTITUTION,' (as if he was under apprehensions of being suspected as a

pretended friend, or that *others*, who differed from him, were all in the wrong) laments, with much *seeming* philanthropy, that men should "*differ in opinion on the political divi-*
"*sions of the present day, as it sours the mind,*
"*and affects the best and nearest friendships.*"
Certainly it is to be lamented, as a very great evil, that men cannot always agree upon WHAT IS RIGHT! Hence it is not to be wondered at, if they who *do* distinguish the RIGHT from the WRONG, should be *soured*, and even ANGRY, when others seem to be acting evidently *wrong*, in supporting a *bad cause* with sophistical arguments, canting language, and determined obstinacy; all clearly tending to the ruin of their country, and to the destruction of themselves! This they either cannot *see*, or else they have such an inglorious pride of opinion, as OVERWHELMS their UNDERSTANDINGS, and HARDENS THEIR HEARTS! When this *is seen*, who would appear the affected stoic, and not be moved?

When

When we find our friends *infatuated,* and led away, by the artful, delusive doctrines of *vicious,* and *cruel men,* it is but virtue to let them see we *are displeased* at their delusions; it would be *hypocrisy,* and it would indicate an unmanly insensibility, to submit in silence!

The *least* sensation we can have, is a mixture of *pity* and *indignation,* when we see those whom we respect and regard, ranging themselves on the side of men who cherish such detestable principles of politics as would destroy our constitution at a blow; and who would blindly involve themselves and families in endless misery, through their own *envy,* and *implacability* of *temper.* Such are the men who eagerly pant to

" Kiss the lips of *unacquainted change,*
" And pick *poor* matter for *revolt* and *wrath.*"

Yes, we have too much reason to know that these are a people who so inveterately hate

hate our CHURCH and STATE, that, in their malignant fury, they would run any risk to destroy them, in order to strengthen their *faction*, to attain to POWER, and to lead us to the miseries of WRETCHED FRANCE!

Let not these sentiments be mistaken for *choler*, or the warmth of *party zeal*—no! I will leave such motives to those enthusiastic fanatics, the Corresponding Society, and the other malignant enemies of their country.—I speak the *plain* language which an Englishman has a right to use who SINCERELY regards his King and country; the government of which was undoubtedly in *momentary danger* of being *overturned*, till some wholesome restraining bills were framed to prevent the seditious and licentious from plotting to destroy its ancient fabric!

" ———— O thoughts of men accurst!
" Past and to come seem best; things present worse."

I have

I have no hatred to any *class* or *sect* of people whatever; I have lived amongst several, and have *laughed* at their *prejudices*, because they were then *too weak* to do ANY HARM; but now, when they would have their principles quickened into *action*, 'tis full time for the friends of Church and State to guard against, and vigorously to resist their wicked machinations; it is not as formerly, when parties ran high between High Church and Low Church; no! it is now *High Church* against NO CHURCH AT ALL!

Yes, towers and steeples, built by our pious ancestors, would all come toppling down, and mix with the *deplored* wreck of *lost* ORDER, LIBERTY, and LAW!!!

The writer above alluded to says, "to fetter "the freedom of the mind, or stop the current "of opinion, would be an attempt as *impotent* "as it is *absurd!*" By no means! If opinion be

be not corrected in a *certain degree*, both in respect to *political* as well as religious subjects, CONFUSION, instead of good order, would soon be the *certain consequence:*—the history of this country, and of almost every other, can point it out. Full well we know

" How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds
" Make deeds ill done!"

I presume there is not a government in the world, whether *regular* or *irregular*, which has not some laws to restrain an *unbridled* licence of opinion from being published to the injury of the State; without such laws no government could *last long*; it would indeed be truly *impotent* without such restraints!

" We must not make a scare-crow of the law,
" Setting it up to fear the birds of prey,
" And let it keep one shape, till custom make it
" Their perch and not their terror."

Let

Let us for a moment examine as to "*the* "*absurdity of fettering men's minds;*" for the author

> " Hath play'd on this prologue, like a
> " Child on a recorder;* a sound, but not
> " In government."

When the mind of man unhappily grows *outrageous,* we restrain its dangerous operations by manacling the body, to prevent the miserable sufferer from harming other people as well as himself; thus, when men's minds become so depraved and licentious, so utterly *lost to virtue,* and the love of their country, as to attempt, by *inflammatory* writings and *intemperate* speeches, to destroy a constitution famed throughout the world for the mildness of her laws, her extensive liberties, and equal distribution of justice; is it not

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* A *pipe* or *flute* was formerly called a *recorder!* I presume because the pitch note *recorded* the given sound to singers—as country singers now use a *pitch-pipe!*

pru-

prudent and wise in those who would be involved in the general misery, to take some method of preventing this contagious fever of the mind from spreading, to the total destruction of this admired form of government? And how have our rulers done this? It is not by using the bloody instrument of death, nor by banishment, fine, or imprisonment; neither is it by what the author calls in his imagery the introduction of an intellectual guillotine; no! it is nothing more than a friendly *notice* or *advice* from the government to a *refractory minority* of our countrymen, (and unhappily no country is without some such turbulent subjects) that if they do not desist from *endeavouring* and *threatening* to overturn the state, and to fill it with *confusion, plunder,* and *murder,* they must be obliged, for the *security* and *defence* of the nation, to seize their persons, and bring them to an *impartial* trial, before a *jury of their peers!*

I take

I take this to be *salutary advice*, rather than any infringement on our liberties; and if it should be considered as a sort of guillotine to a *seditious mind*, let the man reflect that this *gentle* restraint may save his head from a real instrument of that kind, which no doubt would be introduced in this kingdom if his own principles should unhappily gain ground. And that such is their determination is incontestible, if their principles are not belied in their own pamphlets; for one of these writers describes, in a very accurate manner, not only the length and breadth of the stage, and the shape of the guillotine, but also tells us unequivocally, that it is designed for a great number of people! But it would be just as probable that this miscreant and his associates would come in for a share of its all *levelling* use, as well as their innocent countrymen, whose murder is so palpably forestalled.

If those who *falsely* think the subject is

oppressed by these bills, let it be remembered that the Corresponding Society, and their adherents, were the cause; they first worked their slow poison into the minds of the ignorant and vulgar, in seditious publications; then farther prepared them by the most inflammatory speeches, till at last they became full charged to commit

" A *deed* without a *name!*"

" This would have been
" The most tyranneous and bloody act,
" The most arch deed of piteous massacre,
" That ever yet this land was guilty of!"

Yes! these audacious setters-on of regicides have, notoriously, long corresponded with the foreign enemies of their country, they have been spies on the actions of their countrymen, and furnished the enemy with intelligence; and, no doubt, for attempting to kill the King, these degenerated Englishmen were furnished with something more valuable than *assignats!*—they

" Received the *golden* earnest of his death."

" That sweet KING-KILLER, and *dear divorce*
" 'Twixt natural son and sire!"

As this is not altogether unsimilar to the attempt that was made against the person of the gallant and renowned Henry Vth. I am tempted to give an extract of his speech, who, on discovering the plot, says to them, in the poet's language of the drama,

" You have conspired against our royal person;
" Joined with an enemy proclaimed, and from his coffers
" Received the golden earnest of our death;
" Wherein you would have sold your King to slaughter,
" His princes and his peers to servitude,
" His subjects to oppression and contempt,
" And his whole kingdom into desolation.
" Touching our person seek we no revenge;
" But we our kingdom's safety must so tender,
" Whose ruin you have sought, that to her laws
" We do deliver you."

I wish the remainder of the speech applied as much to the purpose, on the present occasion, as it did when Henry had got his enemies in his power, and pronounced this sentence—

" Go,

" ——————— Go, therefore, hence,
" *Poor miserable wretches,* to your death;
" *The taste whereof God of his mercy give*
" *You patience to endure, and true repentance*
" *Of all your dear offences!*"

The author talks of the Bill of Rights as a Palladium of British Liberty! I beg leave to remark, that when our virtuous ancestors framed this Bill, in the first year of William and Mary, they did not provide any particular restrictive law to prevent meetings of the people, because they could not possibly imagine any government would suffer a set of *miscreants* to meet *avowedly* for the purpose of annihilating the ancient laws of the land, which their ancestors from time to time had *made* and MAINTAINED with their *lives!* And when they made them for the benefit of posterity, little did they imagine that such a number of their ungrateful descendants would attempt to destroy all that they had in their valour and wisdom been erecting for many centuries; but

as

as it is beyond all comparison more easy to *destroy* than to build, so would it be the delight of the mischievous to tear to pieces that which is out of their ability to put together; as it is ever the property of the vulgar ignorant to *despise* what they do not *understand!*

What a gross insult is it to the VAST MAJORITY of their *peaceable* and *well-disposed* countrymen, daringly to tell them (for actions speak as loudly as words) "*You shall* "*be governed in some other way than you* "*are now! and, according as our caprice,* "*ignorance, insolence, and waywardness, shall* "*direct us, we will force you to be guided! and* "*there being no law to prevent us from holding* "*our public seditious meetings, in the very face* "*of government, we will bring a mob, and* "*drive you into a revolution!*"

Such are the men who call themselves the *friends* of the people, and dupe fools by their hypo-

hypocritical *cant*, in calling them by the endearing appellations of brethren, citizens, friends, &c. These are the guillotining gentlemen, that promise you revolutions and *reforms*; that bid you TRUST to them! Yes! *trust me*, it would be in cutting your heads off, violating the chastity of your wives and daughters, robbing your houses, and plundering your farms,—in the way of *friendship!!*

" What *viler* thing upon the earth, than *friends*,
" Who can bring *noblest* minds to *basest* ends!"

To such malecontent bad-hearted citizens may be applied the *spirited* but *harsh* language of Marcius, when he rates the vagabond populace of Rome.

" ——————— He that trusts to you,
" Where he should find you lions, finds you hares;
" Where foxes, geese; you are no surer, no,
" Than is the coal of fire upon the ice,
" Or hailstone in the sun. Your virtue is,
" To make him worthy whose offence subdues him,
" And curse that justice did it. Who deserves greatness,
" Deserves your hate; and your affections are
" A sick

" A sick man's appetite; who desires most that
" Which would encrease his evil—He that depends
" Upon your favours, *swims with fins of lead,*
" *And hews down oaks with rushes*—hang ye—trust ye?"

What government would be worthy the confidence of a loyal and generous people, if they heard the language of such men, and did not provide against the *threatened* evils? And how lost to every virtuous impulse for their country's welfare, if a people, knowing this, did not resent the insult, by giving energy and a spring to government, by not only consenting but *desiring* that a law should pass to prevent the *total extirpation* of their liberties.

The truth is, and it may perhaps apply to us, that men have abundantly more liberty than they will make a right use of; and it is only rational in us to consent to the lopping off an over-exuberant branch when the whole body may suffer by its superfluity: and in the plenitude of our liberty we can well afford this,

this, for too much liberty often brings *restraint*.—This is finely noted in Measure for Measure, on Lucio seeing his friend Claudio carrying to prison;—he says,

'Why, how now, Claudio? whence comes this restraint?'

To which he replies,

"*From too much liberty*, my Lucio, *liberty*:
"As surfeit is the father of too much fast,
"So every scope by the immoderate use
"Turns to *restraint*: our natures do pursue,
"Like rats that ravin down their bane,
"A thirsty evil; and when we drink we die."

Certain it is, *that a spirit of liberty, where the reins of government are suffered to relax, is too apt to deviate into a licentiousness which counteracts its own end.*

This REAL friend to the King says, that the petitioners, both with strict *propriety* and *justice*, have conveyed their sentiments, &c. and that it is excess of insolence to blame either

either party for having done their duty, &c. This is *gentle* and *accommodating!* not SPECIOUS nor INSINUATING! he appears, however, not to regard the latin adage of ESSE QUAM VIDERE, for with these sentiments of *liberal tolerance,* he presently after, not only declares his own predilection in favour of the counter-petition, but tacitly condemns the petitioners in favour of the first bill, by giving large *praise* and *credit* to the counter-petitioners, in saying "*they have to a certainty* "*rendered the public the most* LASTING *and* "IMPORTANT SERVICE!"

Now if the writer really *thought so,* it is inconsistent in him to publish it, after *saying* it is the excess of insolence to calumniate either party! for what is this, but, in a *couverte* manner, depreciating the service of the one by magnifying and extolling the merit of the other? The author may, perhaps, call this *a prejudice governed by moderation!*

but, as I profess myself to be no *sophist*, I will boldly declare, without any fear of being thought an immoderate or an unthinking man, that so far from supposing the counter-petitioners have rendered any service to the public, I take the VERY REVERSE to be the TRUTH!!!

As the gentleman has asserted, that freedom of opinion, delivered at public meetings, is a part of our Palladium of Liberty, so the liberty of the press has also been called the Palladium of British Liberty; and what is this liberty, when exercised in its fullest extent? why, for men to reproach and abuse each other—for cowardly assassins to stab the fairest characters, and justify their base proceedings by an abuse of the sacred name of liberty!

It has been the complaint of all ages, even when the scandal was merely *oral*, that

" ——————— No greatness in mortality
" Can censure 'scape—back wounding calumny,
" The whitest virtue strikes."

But

But it is now infinitely more insufferable, since the freedom of the press has circulated the most envenomed falsities, not only to the injury and deprivation of private character, but in aiming its envenomed shafts against that constitution which has given existence and support to all our privileges of liberty! This is a sort of political parricide, or rather a *felo de se;* for here the subject attempts his own death blow! And is this freedom of the press a blessing? No! unrestrained, it is a *curse*, that men have the *liberty* to inflict on each other! and were a bill brought in to prevent its abominable licentiousness, the outcry would be as loud and violent, as it now is against the bills for the better protecting his Majesty's person, and preserving the constitution! And by what sort of people would it be opposed? No doubt by the same which has opposed the late bills! And would it affect our liberties, or the freedom of the press? No! to restrain its licentiousness can no more

more hurt the liberty of it, than a punishment for murder or robbery can be said to injure the liberty of the subject! on the contrary, it would be a protection to the *virtuous*, against the attacks of malevolent scoffers, who are generally themselves the most vulnerable in their own characters!

This idea is, in *one line*, admirably conceived by our incomparable bard:

"Foul is most *foul*, being foul to be a scoffer."

One of his commentators makes the following observations on this line:—

"This is a just thought; and it would be "well if it were more attended to.—No per-"sons have a right to censure others, who are "not free from blame themselves."

This maxim, if extended to the strictness of it, would silence all scandal, detraction, and

and reproach; and indeed it has been observed, that the most faultless persons are generally the least severe.

The author says, that "injudicious distinc-"tions have been indiscreetly made between "the signatures, &c. of the higher and lower "orders of society, and that they have been "justly reprobated in parliament by the "minister's friends and antagonists."—Now, Sir, I know that the minister's friends in parliament did refer the members to examine the superior respectability of the one to the other, and their antagonists referred them also to a few of the counter-petitions, such as Norwich, Nottingham, Edinburgh, &c. where, *no doubt*, they would find numbers engaged in a regular system of opposition to government; and wherefore, upon such a great national question as this is, should they not be examined, and proper distinctions made on their respectability? Respectable people are surely

surely better judges of the necessity of them, less liable to be imposed upon, more independent, and consequently more interested in maintaining the welfare of the state, than those of no property, or who may be set on and made dupes of by the enemies of their country!

So far from thinking that any *injudicious distinctions* have been made on this occasion, I perfectly agree with our great dramatic bard, who says of such people,

" Look, as I blow this feather from my face,
" And as the air blows it to me again,
" Obeying with my wind, when I do blow,
" And yielding to another when it blows,
" Commanded always by the greater gust;
" Such is the lightness of your common men."

The writer I allude to has descanted as he thought proper on this subject, and has given his decisive preference! so have I, in prefering the humanity and gallantry of indignant English-

Englishmen, who, when they saw their good King insulted and threatened with death, have come boldly forth in support of him, as an amiable individual, and at the same time a most necessary part of that constitution which the Corresponding Society, and their adherents, would destroy!

Yes, instead of assuming the harsh and gloomy features of proud phlegmatic men, they step forth with a manly sensibility, that does them the greatest honour; they generously sympathize with an insulted monarch; they remember that no king is strong enough

"To tie the gall up in a slandering tongue."

They liberally recollect the general situation of all Kings, and are ready to exclaim,

"O place of greatness! Millions of false eyes
"Are stuck upon thee. Volumes of report
"Run with these false and most contrarious quests
"Upon thy doings.—*Thousand 'scapes of wit*
"Make thee the father of their idle dreams,
"And rack thee in their fancies!"

The gentleman talks of a monopoly of opinion, and that he *will* enjoy his own sentiments, notwithstanding he differs from friends whom he may respect, &c. The monopoly of opinion alluded to, I presume, is the VOICE OF THE PEOPLE at large, and the vast majority of the representatives of the nation in both houses of parliament, for the BETTER PROTECTION of his Majesty's person and government. That he is determined to enjoy his own sentiments without restraint, I conceive, is altogether an unnecessary *advertisement to the public;* he may do so in *despite* of them; and *he has done so without restraint!!!*

Yet, as it was his wish to turn physician on this occasion, to allay (as he calls it) the HECTIC disorder of the public, he might have given NOTICE in the words of Touchstone;

" Invest me in my motley; give me leave
" To speak my mind, and I will through and through
" Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
" If they will patiently receive my medicine."

But

But who, in his senses, would trust such men, when they can go to the FOUNTAIN HEAD, for the cure of their distempers?

" If we trust our contagious sickness
" Into the hands of quacks and journeymen,
" Farewell all physic: and what follows then?
" Commotions, uproars, with a general taint
" Of the whole state!"

This writer is so tenacious of his own opinion, that he will allow none to others; he insolently tells us of men whose passions unhappily for a moment overpower their understandings.—Nothing wonderful! Passion has long been defined a temporary madness! How does this apply to the friends of the Bills, or does he think them all mad? should he moreover not consider, that this argument cuts both ways?

He is yet so tenacious of his right, that he appears quite alarmed, lest the petitioners should

" Pluck from his memory a rooted sorrow,
" Raze out the written troubles of his brain,
" And with some sweet oblivious antidote,
" Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
" Which weighs upon his heart."

" They want," says he, " to EXTIRPATE " every IDEA but their own, they are copying " *that horrible example of the late miserable and* " *infatuated rulers of the French nation, in* " *proscribing and cutting off every individual* " *who had the virtue or firmness to differ with* " *them in opinion.*"

Pray what is all *this*, but " a monopoly of " most VIOLENT OPINION?" AN EXCESS OF INSOLENCE AND FOLLY, in audaciously comparing the SINCERE friends of their country to such men as the late execrable rulers of France!

This is one way of *extirpating* every idea but his own, by *modestly* telling those who

differ

differ from him, that their passions not only overpower their understandings! but that they are like tyrants, murderers, and usurpers!!!

This French allusion, however, is peculiarly unfortunate, for, as I take it, a good part of the MEANING of the petition for these Bills, went as a prevention to our having such *infatuated* and execrable RULERS in this country, as the *infamous* Corresponding Society and *their friends,* assiduously aim to impose upon us.*

" Men who are
" Uncapable of pity, void and empty
" From every dram of mercy."

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* Members of parliament, in Opposition, must be in the very last state of desperation, to join in any of the measures of these people, against the administration of affairs; but, indeed, with respect to the political principles of these gentlemen, I believe, that if the administration were composed of angels, or ministers of grace, they would revolt against them, on the angelical principles of *enjoying* some of the *angels themselves!*

These Bills are at last passed, in opposition to all the infamous arts and misrepresentations of the unnatural enemies of their country.—Nor can it be pretended, that legislators have

" Wrested the law to their authority,
" To do a great right, and do a little wrong."

But here they would, in all probability, be deceived! Several of their supposed friends, in associations, who call themselves Friends of the People, have debated the following question—" Whether, after *they had turned out* the present administration, *they* should permit the leaders of the present opposition to take their places!" When, after furious debates, in most *diabolical language*, it passed, *nemine dissentiente*, that *none of them should come in*, as they could not be trusted, being all alike; Fox, Sheridan, and Grey, full as bad as Pitt, Dundas, and Rose.

I aver this assertion to be strictly true, and recently happened in a society of these *pretended friends*, in Bath! A society, however, in some other place, connected with the Corresponding Society, went much farther than this; they resolved, that when a revolution was brought about, the *outs* as well as the *ins* should be *all* guillotined for the crimes they had formerly committed. So that, poor fellows, their case is truly desperate, their ambitious and selfish views being cut off by Mr. Pitt, as their heads would be BY THE FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE!!!

No!

No!

" Things done well,
" And with a care, exempt themselves from fear."

It is now the decided sense of the majority of people in the kingdom, that the Bills were actually necessary to save the country! Vain would have been our victorious arms in beating the common enemy of mankind, if we permitted our internal and far more dreaded enemies to destroy it!

" Cut purses of the empire and the rule;
" That from the shelf the precious diadem would steal,
" And put it in their pockets!"

If we are grateful to our gallant countrymen, who have so gloriously destroyed the marine of France and Holland, and captured their islands, we have no less reason to honour Mr. PITT, who brought in these Bills, surrounded with more difficulties and dangers than any minister was ever yet exposed to; had

had he never before done any one act that deserved well of his country, his noble determined conduct will now insure him gratitude from his countrymen, and the admiration of posterity!!!

And,

" To those *sick* interpreters, or *weak* ones,"

Who may still calumniate him for this his BEST ACT, he may say to them,

" If I am traduced by tongues which neither know
" My faculties or person, yet will be
" The chronicles of my doing, let me say
" 'Tis but the fate of place, and the rough brake
" That virtue must go through. We must not stint
" Our necessary actions, in the fear
" To cope malicious censures; which ever,
" As ravenous fishes do a vessel follow,
" That is new trimmed, but benefit no further
" Than vainly longing."

The author of the letter I have mentioned *kindly hoped* that our liberties would never be *wrested from us*, nor *treacherously surrendered!*

dered! I hope the honourable conduct of parliament, which so well deserves the applause of their constituents, will now convince him, that instead of their *wresting from us*, or *treacherously surrendering*, they have *secured* to us those liberties, which, without their efforts, probably would have been *wrested from us* in a very short time!

By what motive the author was induced to write his *very equivocal letter* he best knows, but the generality of his readers will be apt to cry out *cui bono!*

Where the necessity of repeating the hacknied sentiment of "separate the rich and "poor, and you loosen the firmest bands of "society, and drive them virtually into an "open declaration of war?" Wherefore sound this tremendous alarm? who has attempted to do this? as also the following *insinuation:* "To make a man a knave, it is often suffi-

"cient

"cient to let him know that you believe him "to be one!" Now as the author's subject is on the *petitions*, I should like to ask him which of the parties have been ACCUSED of KNAVERY?

Such reflections, in the words of the author, are only calculated "*to sour the temper, and* "*to affect the best and nearest friendships*;"— they remind the malevolent ignorant that they ought to be revenged, because it is *suspected* that their superiors *suspect them*.

To conclude, we all know that every man in this country has a right to petition, and God forbid any man should ever be deprived of so just a right; at the same time let us examine a little into the design of the two petitions, which have lately made so much noise. The first was for the better protection of his Majesty's person, and the prevention of seditious meetings from plotting the

destruction

destruction of the constitution;—the second, or the counter-petition, was to request the parliament would do no such thing; being so tenacious of their liberty, that they would not give up an atom of it to make a law for so necessary a purpose. The people, say they, have a right to meet, and it would be depriving them of a most invaluable blessing, if they were restrained from having the satisfaction of attending meetings at their pleasure, to hear hired orators inculcating treason and sedition!

The author of a very good pamphlet, lately published, opens his work in these words:—"There never was a time when it was so "much worth while to be an inhabitant of "Great-Britain, as at this moment, &c."

Nothing can be more true than this! and yet, from the conduct of the Corresponding Society, and their friends, one should be

led to suppose the reverse of this position was the truth. These people treat our Constitution with derision and contempt; and, at all risks, would attempt to destroy the beautiful fabric, to erect some chimerical structure of their own! But, alas! after making the fatal experiment, would they not have reason to exclaim, in the language of the poet?

"What our *contempts* do often *hurl* from us,
"We *wish* it our's *again*; the present pleasure,
"By *revolution* lowering, does become
"The *opposite* of itself."

The author above quoted says, the public have a right to express, with *decency* and *moderation*, their wishes, hopes, and apprehensions; and that the Bill of Rights (which is nothing more than a recapitulation of the ancient laws of the land) has declared this to be the undoubted right of the subject. Who will deny this? and were they ever prevented this liberty, when conducted with *decency* and *moderation?*

moderation? But does the Palladium of British Liberty, or any ancient law, tolerate such multitudinous and outrageous meetings as have lately assembled? Was there any *decency* and *moderation* at the meetings at Chalk Farm, Copenhagen-House, and at Mr. Thelwall's Lectures?

Are Englishmen so degenerated from their ancestors, so ashamed of those wise laws, which bind the constitution together, as to take a pleasure in hearing insolent, mercenary wretches vilify their King, his government, its laws, and every thing that Englishmen once held sacred? Have they not lost that spirit, pride, and character of Englishmen, when they *pay* a *price* to *hear* and *read* libels on their country, as if they were aliens, or totally estranged from it?

This might comport with French jacobinism, but more exalted conduct should be

expected

expected from Englishmen. Our patriotic forefathers would not have heard their country thus abused, without the emotion of honest indignation, and a desire of revenge, for the insult; and it is as unpardonable in us to bear it tamely, as to hear our venerable parents abused, and not have courage to stop the malevolent tongue of the slanderer!

Admitting there was no law to stop the tumultuous proceedings of some of our unnatural countrymen, yet common sense tells us it was necessary to establish one! and no wise nor *good man* would regret an abridgment of such liberty which might ultimately tend to overthrow the government! It is securing the substance, instead of grasping at the shadow!

In truth, Sir, I do not want to separate the rich from the poor, the idea is ridiculous; (as the friends of government and good order are ever

ever the surest friends of the poor) but I would, at the same time, without meaning to be inviduous, make some distinction between the WELL-MEANING and the ILL-MEANING, because the latter are "the people who would "loosen the *firmest* bonds of society." Every man, therefore, who signed the first petition, undoubtedly not only MEANT WELL, but ACTED WELL! Every individual may be considered as the firm friend and pillar of the constitution; "*and in this view, they have to a certainty* "*rendered the public the most lasting and im-* "*portant services!!!*" Not a man of them but would gallantly say to his sovereign

"———— Though perils did
"Abound as thick as thought could make 'em, and
"Appear in forms as horrid; yet *my duty*,
"As doth a rock against the chiding flood,
"Should the approach of this wild river break,
"And stand unshaken *your's*."

I will not say that the counter-petitioners were not all, all honourable men! I know a few

few who are men of the best understandings, and of the most loyal principles; but the best and wisest have their prejudices, and sometimes perhaps see through a medium, which divides

"One thing entire into many objects."

As,

"Shapeless perspectives, directly gaz'd on
"Shew nothing but confusion, eyed *awry*
"Distinguish form."

"——————— our very eyes
"Are sometimes like our judgments, blind."

In a word, men may be caught by

"The seeming truth which *cunning* times put on
"To *entrap* the wisest."

Of some of the counter-petitions which we have seen, (we will not say in what part of the kingdom) the major part were signed by a set of patriotic gentlemen, who had, from their infancy, been taught prejudices against the church and state of their country; and it is not difficult to get a very considerable number

of

of such subjects, to oppose government upon every occasion.* Some also, that we noted, were such apostles of liberty, as have been

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* These are the gentlemen who cry out so lamentably for peace; and their opposition is so regular, that neither peace nor war would content them! Is it a successful war, or a necessary one, they will equally oppose it, with such a plausible zeal, as though they had monopolized all the humanity in the kingdom; and yet these very people would run the risk of a civil war, to attain their own ends! I question whether these men, after we had a peace, would not petition government for a BRISK WAR; accusing administration of being too pacific, and letting our enemies insult us! Thus, instead of their being so solicitous about peace, it would not be surprizing, were we to hear those burning patriots cry out,

"———— O war, thou son of hell,
"Whom angry heavens do make their minister,
"Throw in the frozen bosoms of our part
"Hot coals of vengeance."

These *constant* opposition gentlemen, however, do us some good; they openly let us see what they are, and whom we are to trust.

Mr. Grant mentions, in his celebrated speech, that a certain set of people impute every disaster, whether natural or accidental, to the mal-administration of the government.

Our

so long in the practice of writing and meeting for the good of their country, that their fellow-citizens were ungrateful enough, to

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Our great master of human nature expresses a similar idea, with his usual ability, on an occasion, however, extremely different. It is a strong description of the situation of a sovereign, with respect to the people, after he had forfeited their love, confidence, and esteem.—Pandulpho, the Pope's legate, speaking of John's keeping his nephew Arthur in prison, says,

" This art so evilly born shall cool the hearts
" Of all his people. and freeze up their zeal;
" That no small advantage shall step forth
" To check his reign, but they will cherish it.
" No natural exhalation in the sky,
" *No scape of nature*, no *distempered day*,
" No common wind, no customed event,
" But they will pluck away its natural cause,
" And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs,
" Abortives, and presages, tongues of heaven,
" Plainly denouncing vengeance upon John."

What a striking contrast is this to the situation of our beloved monarch!

" Whom has he defrauded? Whom has he oppressed?
" Or whose hand has he received any bribe, to blind his
" eyes withal? The answer of the nation is; Thou hast
" NOT defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou
" taken aught at any man's hand! Every honest man in
" the kingdom will say

" GOD IS OUR WITNESS."

repay the kind endeavours of these friends of reform, by assaulting them in their own houses, which they would have pulled about their ears, but for the interference of the magistracy. Other signatures were of men who had actually been accused, before a magistrate, of uttering seditious and disloyal expressions, and of some who had often rejoiced at the hopes of a revolution. And lastly, we observed the signatures of a set of gentlemen, who, we are informed, did it out of respect to Mr. Hardy, the shoemaker, who was lately tried for high treason, and whose sympathizing associates have been particularly assiduous in

"Wooing poor *craftsmen* with the *craft* of smiles."

"The political divisions of the present day, says the author, very *piteously*, "have an un-"fortunate influence on society!" Alas! poor gentleman, it is really a pitiable case.—He has, however, one consolation, and therefore we beg leave to congratulate him on his

affiliation with these *crafty* sons of St. CRISPIN; for should he pay due attention to their vocation, he may, in time, *turn* a *pump* as adroitly as he now does a *period;* and how ever well that may be, the *former* employment, he may rest assured, will have a far better INFLUENCE on SOCIETY than the latter! And let us tell him that without any more of HIS *dispassionate* statements and prescriptions, the *hectic* will cure itself! But

> " Therein the patient
> " Must minister unto himself;"

By cautiously guarding against the poisons of empirical reformers; who, with their new philosophical experiments, would endanger a SOUND CONSTITUTION, by pretending to cleanse it from corruption!

May we not say to these disorganizing quacks, what Macbeth does to his doctor:

> " Throw physic to the dogs, we'll none of it."

No! when we have occasion for *prescriptions,* to heal the wounds of the state, we will rely

rely on the wisdom and skill of those ancient practitioners, King, Lords, and Commons; who will not only take care to physic

" Those whose diseases are grown so catching,"

But that our Constitution shall not be destroyed by desperate and presumptuous pretenders!

Let these *pretending* reformists recollect the following poetical description of the *arcana imperii,* or mysteries of government; and not, in their ignorance, assume to themselves those investigating faculties, so necessary for real statesmen!

" The providence that's in a *watchful* state,
" Knows almost every grain of Pluto's gold:*
" Finds bottom in th' incomprehensive deep;
" Keeps place with thought; and almost, like the gods,
" Does thoughts unveil in their dumb cradles.
" There is a mystery, with which relation†
" Durst never meddle, in the soul of state;
" Which hath an operation more divine,
" Than breath or pen can give expression to."

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* Acquainted with all the resources of trade, commerce, or finances.

† Recital, explanation, or comment.

FINIS.

ABSTRACT

OF

AN ACT

FOR THE

SAFETY AND PRESERVATION

OF

His Majesty's Person,

and GOVERNMENT,

Against Treasonable and Seditious Practices.

PREAMBLE STATES

I. THAT the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, having duly considered the daring outrages offered to his Majesty's sacred person, in his passage to and from parliament, at the opening of the session, and the continued attempts of wicked and evil-disposed persons to disturb the tranquility of the kingdom,

dom, by seditious pamphlets and speeches, published and dispersed with unremitting industry, in contempt of his Majesty's royal person and dignity, tending to the overthrow of the laws, government, and happy constitution of these realms, do beseech his Majesty that it may, and it is hereby enacted,—That if any person or persons whatsoever, after the day of passing this act, and during the natural life of his Majesty, and until the end of the next session of parliament after a demise of the crown, shall compass, imagine, devise, or intend, death, or destruction, maiming, or wounding, imprisonment, or restraint, of our sovereign Lord the King, his heirs, or successors; or to deprive or depose him, or them, from the stile, honour, or kingly name of the Imperial crown of this realm, or any other his Majesty's dominions, or countries; or levy war against his Majesty, his heirs, and successors; or move any foreigner, or stranger, to invade these realms; such person or persons, being legally convicted thereof, shall be deemed, declared, and adjudged to be a traitor and traitors; and shall suffer pains, penalties, and forfeit as in cases of high treason.

II. That if any person or persons, from the time, and within the term aforesaid, shall, maliciously and advisedly, by writing, printing, preaching, or other speaking, express, utter, or declare, words or sentences to stir up the people to hatred or contempt of the person of his Majesty,

ty, his heirs, or successors, or the government and constitution of the realm, as by law established, then every such person and persons, being thereof legally convicted, shall be liable to such punishment as may be inflicted by law in cases of high misdemeanors; and any person or persons offending a second time, and being thereof legally convicted, may be adjudged, at the discretion of the court, to suffer such punishment as may now by law be inflicted, or be banished, or transported, for such term as the court may appoint, not exceeding seven years.

III. That if any offender, or offenders, who shall be so ordered to be banished, or transported, in manner aforesaid, shall be afterwards at large within any part of the kingdom of Great-Britain, without some lawful cause, before the expiration of the term for which he or they shall have been ordered to be banished, or transported, as aforesaid; he or they, being thereof lawfully convicted, shall suffer death, as in cases of felony, without benefit of clergy.

IV. That no person or persons, by virtue of this present act, shall, for any misdemeanor, incur any of the penalties herein before mentioned, unless he, she, or they, be prosecuted within six calendar months after the offence commited; and that no person shall, upon trial,

be

be convicted for any misdemeanor, but by the oaths of two credible witnesses.

V. That all and every person or persons, that shall at any time be accused, indicted, or prosecuted, for any offence declared to be treason by this act, shall be entitled to the benefit of the act of the seventh of his late Majesty King William III. entitled, "An Act for regulating of "Trials in cases of Treason and Misprison of Treason;" and also, to the provisions made by another act of parliament, passed in the seventh of her late Majesty Queen Anne, entitled "An Act for Improving the Union of the Two Kingdoms."

VI. That nothing contained in the act shall extend to prevent any prosecution by information, or indictment, at the common law, unless the party shall have been first prosecuted under this act.

ABSTRACT

OF

AN ACT

FOR THE MORE EFFECTUALLY

PREVENTING

Seditious Meetings and Assemblies.

PREAMBLE RECITES

I. THAT assemblies of divers persons, collected for the purpose or under the pretext of deliberating on public grievances, and of agreeing on petitions, complaints, remonstrances, &c. to the King, or both houses, or either house of parliament, had been made use of to serve the ends of factious and seditious persons, to the great danger of the public peace, and might become the means of producing confusion and calamities in the nation,

It is

It is therefore enacted,

That no meeting, of any description of persons, exceeding the number of fifty, and except legally called, convened and assembled, in manner therein specified, shall be holden for the purpose, or on the pretext of considering of, or preparing any petition, remonstrance, or address to the King, or either house of parliament, for alteration of matters in church or state, unless notice of the intention, and purpose of the same, shall be given in the names of seven persons at least, being householders, resident within the county, city, or place, where the same shall be proposed to be holden; whose places of abode, and descriptions, shall be given and circulated in some public newspaper; and that such notice shall not be inserted in any newspaper unless the authority to insert the same shall be signed by seven persons, being householders; which authority shall be written at the foot of a true copy of such notice, and be delivered to the person required to insert the same in such newspaper, which shall be carefully preserved, and a true copy (if required) be delivered to any justice of the peace for the county where such person shall reside, or such newspaper shall be printed. Any person inserting such notice without authority, or any person to whom such notice and authority shall have been delivered, refusing to produce the same, or to deliver a true copy thereof, within three days after

after the same shall have been required, shall, for every offence, forfeit the sum of fifty pounds, to the person who shall sue for the same.

II. That it shall be lawful to deliver any such notice, signed as aforesaid, five days at least, before the day on which such meeting shall be holden, to the clerk of the peace of the county, riding, or division; who shall forthwith send a true copy to three justices of the peace at least, resident therein; or in case the justices of the city, borough, or town, where such meeting shall be proposed to be holden, shall have exclusive jurisdiction, then to three of such justices, or to so many as shall be resident within such exclusive jurisdiction; and such notice shall be effectual to all intents and purposes whatsoever.

III. That all meetings exceeding the number of fifty persons, (except as aforesaid) which shall be holden without previous notice, for the purpose or under the pretext aforesaid, shall be deemed and taken to be unlawful assemblies.

IV. Any persons exceeding the number of fifty, assembled contrary to the provisions aforesaid, and being required or commanded, by one or more justice or justices, by the sheriff of the county, mayor, or other competent magistrate, of any city, or town corporate, by proclamation, in form herein after directed, to disperse them-

themselves, and peaceably depart to their habitations, or business, shall, to the number of twelve or more, continue together by the space of one hour, after such command or request, by proclamation, then such continuing together, to the number of twelve or more, shall be adjudged felony, without benefit of clergy; and the offenders shall be adjudged felons, and shall suffer the pains and penalties as in cases of felony.

V. The form of the proclamation shall be as followeth; that is to say, the justice of the peace, or person authorised to make the same, shall, among the persons assembled, or as near them as he can safely come, command, or cause so to be, silence, while proclamation is making, in these words, or like in effect:—

"Our sovereign Lord the King chargeth and commandeth all persons being assembled, immediately to disperse themselves, and peaceably to depart to their habitations, or to their lawful business, upon the pains contained in the act made in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of King George the Third, for the more effectually preventing seditious meetings and assemblies."

"GOD SAVE THE KING."

VI. That in case any such meeting shall be holden, in pursuance of notice, and the purpose for which the same shall have been declared to be holden, or any matter which

which shall have been proposed to be deliberated upon, shall purport, that any matter or thing, by law established, may be altered otherwise than by the authority of King, Lords, and Commons; or shall tend to incite, or stir up the people to hatred or contempt of the person of his Majesty, his heirs, &c. and the government and constitution of the realm, it shall be lawful for the justice or justices, &c. of the city or town corporate, where such meeting shall be, by proclamation to require or command the persons there assembled to disperse; and if any persons, to the number of twelve or more, so required or commanded to disperse, shall remain or continue together, by the space of one hour after proclamation made, as aforesaid, they shall be adjudged felons, and incur the pains and penalties as in cases of felony.

VII. That if any justice or justices of peace, present at any meeting, shall order any person, or persons, who shall propound, or maintain, any propositions for altering any thing by law established, otherwise than by the authority of King, Lords, and Commons, or hold discourse, for stirring up the people to hatred or contempt of his Majesty, his heirs, &c. or the government and constitution of this realm, to be taken into custody, and such justice or justices, or their peace officers, shall be obstructed in so doing, then he or they shall make, or cause to be made, a proclamation, as aforesaid; and any twelve per-

persons, or more, continuing together, after request or command to disperse, as aforesaid, shall be adjudged felons, and incur the pains and penalties aforesaid.

VIII. Every justice, sheriff, &c. is authorized, on notice of any such meeting, to resort to the place where the same is intended to be holden, and there to do, or cause to be done, such acts and things as the case may require; and such justices, sheriffs, &c. to take and require the assistance of any number of constables, or other officers, within their own, or the district or place wherein such meeting shall be holden; who are required to attend accordingly, and to give such assistance as shall be necessary for the due execution of the act.

IX. That if such persons, so assembled, or twelve or more of them, after proclamation, shall not disperse within one hour, it shall be lawful for every justice, sheriff, &c. the peace officers, of the county, city, or town, where such assembly shall be, and the person or persons, his Majesty's subjects, who shall be assisting them therein, (which they are authorised to command) to seize and apprehend such persons, so assembled and continuing together after proclamation, and to carry them or him before one of his Majestys justices of the peace, that they may be proceeded against according to law. And if any of the persons so assembled shall happen to be killed, maimed, or hurt, by reason of their resisting the persons dis-

dispersing, seizing, or apprehending them, that then every such justice of the peace, sheriff, &c. constables, officers, and other persons, shall be freed, discharged, and indemnified, as well against the King's majesty, his heirs, &c. as all and every other person and persons, for or concerning the killing, maiming, or hurting, any such person or persons, as aforesaid.

X. That if any person, or persons, shall, with force of arms oppose, obstruct, or hinder, and hurt, any justice of the peace, or authorised person, who shall attend, or be going to attend any meeting, or any person or persons making proclamation as aforesaid; that then such opposing, obstructing, letting, hindering, or hurting, such justice, &c. or the person or persons making proclamation, shall be adjudged felony. And that every such person or persons, being assembled to the number of fifty or more, to whom proclamation should have been made, if the same had not been hindered, shall, to the number of twelve or more, continue together, and nor disperse, within one hour after such let or hindrance so made, having knowledge of the same, be adjudged felons, and suffer the pains and penalties accordingly. And if any person, or persons, at any such assembly, shall, with force of arms oppose, obstruct, or let, hinder, or hurt, any justice of the peace, &c. in apprehending or taking into custody, in the execution of any of the provisions of this act, any

person

person, or persons, or endeavouring so to do, then such opposing, obstructing, hindering, or hurting, shall be adjudged felony, without benefit of clergy.

XI. The powers and authorities of this act to extend to and operate in Scotland.

XII. That certain houses, rooms, &c. within the cities of London, Westminster, the neighbourhood, and other places, had been used for the purpose of, and that lectures or discourses had been delivered, and debates held, concerning supposed public grievances, and matters, relating to the laws, constitution, and government of these kingdoms, tending to stir up hatred and contempt of his Majesty's person and government, and constitution of this kingdom,

It is enacted, that every house, room, &c. where such lectures, or debates shall be delivered, or had, concerning any of the matters before-mentioned, for the purpose of raising money, or other valuable thing, from the persons admitted, (unless the opening or using of such house, room, &c. shall have been previously licensed, as herein after mentioned) shall be deemed a disorderly house, or place; and the person by whom the same shall be opened, or used, for the purpose aforesaid, shall forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds, for every day or time that such house, room, &c. shall be opened, or used, to such person as will sue for the same; and be otherwise punished as the

law

law directs in cases of disorderly houses. Every person, managing or conducting the proceedings at such house, &c. or therein debating, or delivering any discourse, or lecture, as aforesaid, and every person who shall pay, give, collect, or receive, any money, or other thing, for the admission of any person into any such room, &c. or deliver, distribute, or receive such ticket, or tickets, as aforesaid, knowing the purpose for which such room, &c. shall be opened or used, shall, for every such offence, forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds, to such person as will sue for the same.

XIII. Any person who shall appear, act, or behave, him, or herself, as master, or mistress, of any such house, &c. shall be deemed to be a person by whom the same is opened, or used, and shall be liable to be sued or prosecuted as such, notwithstanding he or she be not, in fact, the real owner or occupier thereof.

XIV. That it shall be lawful for any justice or justices, &c. who shall have reason to suspect that any house, &c. is or are opened for the purpose of delivering lectures, or debates, contrary to the provisions of this act, to go to such house, &c. and demand to be admitted, and in case of refusal of admittance, the same shall be deemed a disorderly house, or place, within the meaning of this act; and all and every the provisions respecting any house, &c. declared to be a disorderly house, or place, shall be

applied

applied to such house, &c. where admittance shall have been refused, as aforesaid; and every person so refusing shall forfeit the sum of one hundred pounds to any person who shall sue for the same.

XV. That it shall be lawful for any justice or justices of the peace, &c. of any county, city, &c. where any such house, &c. shall be licensed, to go to such house, at the time of delivering any such lecture, or discourse, and demand to be admitted; and in case such justice or magistrate shall be refused admittance, the same shall be deemed, notwithstanding such licence, a disorderly house, or place, within the meaning of this act; and the provisions respecting any disorderly house, &c. shall be applied to such house, &c. and every person refusing admittance, shall forfeit one hundred pounds, to any person who will sue for the same.

XVI. That it shall be lawful for any two or more justices of the peace, of the county, city, &c. where any house, room, or building, shall be, which any person shall be desirous to open, for any of the purposes aforesaid, to grant a licence to any person, or persons, to open the same, for the purpose of delivering, for money, any such lectures, or discourses, on any of the subjects aforesaid, the same being clearly expressed in such licence; for which a fee of one shilling, and no more, shall be paid; and the same shall be in force for one year, and no longer,

or

or for any less space of time, therein to be specified; and which licence such justice may revoke, and declare void, and no longer in force.

XVII. That any person entitled to any of the forfeitures aforesaid, may sue, by action of debt, in any of his Majesty's courts of record at Westminster, in which action it shall be sufficient to declare, that defendant is indebted to plaintiff in the sum of —— (the sum demanded by the action) being forfeited by an act made in the thirty-sixth year, &c. entitled, an act, &c. and the plaintiff, if he shall recover, shall have his full costs. That if any action shall be brought against any person, for any thing done in pursuance of this act, defendant may plead the general issue; and if a verdict pass for the defendant, or the plaintiff discontinue the action, or be nousuited, or judgment be given against the plaintiff, defendant shall have treble costs.

XVIII. That nothing in the act shall be construed to extend to any lectures or discourses to be delivered in any of the universities, by any member or person authorised by the proper officers of the universities respectively.

XIX. That no payment made to any schoolmaster, or other person, by law allowed to teach and instruct youth, in respect of any lectures or discourses delivered by such schoolmaster, or other person, for the instruction only of such youth, shall be deemed a payment of money for ad-

admission to such lectures or discourses, within the intent and meaning of this act.

XX. That nothing in this act contained, shall be deemed to take away, or abridge, any provision already made by the laws of this realm, for the suppression or punishment of any offence described by this act.

XXI. That this act shall be read at every Epiphany quarter sessions of the peace, and at every leet or law day.

XXII. That no person shall be prosecuted by virtue of this act, unless prosecution shall be commenced within six calendar months after the offence committed; and no action shall be brought, for any of the penalties by this act imposed, unless the same shall be brought within three calendar months next after the offence committed.

XXIII. That this act shall commence, and have effect, within the city of London, and twenty miles thereof, from the day after passing the same; and within all other parts of the kingdom, from the expiration of seven days next after the day of passing the same; and shall be and continue in force for three years, from the day of passing this act, and until the end of the then next session of parliament.

Postscript.

I Beg leave to recommend to my readers, the perusal of a very useful and sensible pamphlet, entitled "The Prosperity of Great Britain compared with the State of France," just published by Rowland Hunt, esq. I have not the honour of even personally knowing the gentleman, but I have not seen any production that is better calculated to do more general good; and although he modestly says in his title, that it is principally designed for freeholders, farmers, and artificers, yet I am certain, it will give abundant information to the generality of readers, and pleasure to every friend of church and state.

The author, in his preface, having mentioned the subject I have written on, I beg leave to give the following extracts:

"It is not unamusing to observe, how diligently the bill designed to regulate the meetings of individuals, is described as a restraint on the PEOPLE, and not on their TEACHERS."

"Those who seek for information honestly, and for useful purposes, must ever stand well in the opinion of mankind: they who satisfy this desire by poisoning the current of knowledge, are the assassins of society; those who wish to learn, are the objects of public care; they who study to deceive them, are the subjects of public suspicion.—To the teachers, therefore, and not to the people, is the principle of the bill directed."

" Extempore eloquence is a hidden weapon; what is written can be examined; first opinions can be corrected; and the passions will subside with time. But let the riots in London, in May 1780, and those in Birmingham, on the 21st of July, 1791, give us a warning, what may be the danger arising from popular seduction."

" It is not against the people, nor yet against any sect, that the present law will exert itself. Had such a bill existed in the former case, the Roman Catholic Chapels would not have been destroyed; and hundreds of the deluded people might have been saved; the chapels of the Dissenters in Birmingham, and many valuable houses, might have been in existence. The bill might have prevented the injury; and it is an extraordinary circumstance, but it can be proved, that a few days after the riots in Birmingham, a learned author of a celebrated preface,* lamented, that the laws were not then sufficient to protect the habitation of his friend. But now that the Constitution has been in some danger, and the King in more; a petition is supported against the bill, which gives the legal authority so much wished for at the former period."

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* Dr. Parr.

Benjamin Dickinson